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SERMON CCLIII.

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MONITIONS OF THE JUDGMENT.

2 COR., v. 10.—*We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

THE text is one of many passages in the word of God, in which the great truths concerning immortality are “brought to light”—made plain to all. In it we are taught four things;—that there is to be a future state of rewards and punishments—that before entering upon that state, we must all be judged—that the judge will be the Lord Jesus Christ, and that after being judged each one of us will receive our final allotments according to our deeds done here on earth. These are the points to the illustration of which your attention is invited. And here let imagination be silent, and let us hear in reverent solemnity only the simple truth of God.

I. THERE WILL CERTAINLY BE A FUTURE STATE OF REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS. This is evident,

From the light of nature.—Reason teaches us that God is a righteous moral governor—that he loves virtue, and will reward it, and that he hates evil, and will punish it—and each in exact proportion to its merit or desert. This, however, we know he does not do in this world. Here “all things come alike to all—there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked,”—often do we find the good in adversity, while the evil are prosperous—“the just man perishing in his righteousness, and the wicked prolonging his life in his wickedness”—a Dives feasting in his purple, and a Lazarus

diseased and starving at his gate—a Herod on the throne, and a Paul in the dungeon. These things being so, then, as even the Pagans could reason, if there *be* a God, there must be a future state where his justice shall be made manifest to all—where all the obliquities of this life shall be rectified—its seeming confusion changed to order—its virtues be rewarded, and its sins be punished. Reason further shows us, that man, while on earth, never attains the full perfection of his being, and thus seems to point us to a future state, where he is designed to advance forever, and where it will be from his own folly—his own fault, if he does not grow to an angel's stature in all that is the glory of his nature. Reason also points us to our dread of annihilation, and to our strong desire—our gasping thirst for immortality—to that rising and swelling of the spirit which is so often seen at the bed of death, when the soul, as with the dying Payson, rises to “an angel's energy, and somewhat of an angel's feeling too”—exulting in the prospect of an hereafter, and almost seeming to *grasp* its tangible realities. All these arguments, however, except the first, are, I grant, only sources of strong presumption; for,

The doctrine before us is peculiarly a doctrine of revelation.—Reason may dispel much of the darkness that gathers around the grave, but it requires the power of revelation entirely to banish that darkness. In the book of God, however, “life and immortality” are literally “brought to light”—i. e. they are made perfectly plain. The light of heaven is poured in its focal brightness upon them, and like some dark object when placed in a flood of sunbeams, what was before obscure, is now so plain that none can fail to see it with absolute clearness. Here we are not only assured that there will be a future state, but its nature also is fully revealed. We *hear* “the voice of the archangel and the trump of God.” We *see* the heavings of the resurrection opening every grave, and the deep with convulsive throes giving up its dead, and all the dead, small and great, standing before God. We see the world in flames, and the heavens departing as a scroll, and the universe assembled together. We see the Judge come forth, and the books are opened before us, and we hear the sounds, “Well done,” and “Depart,” thrilling our inmost hearts with all their indications of joy and woe! And hardly do the echoes of the judgment die away upon our hearing, when we see mortality swallowed up, either in life or death eternal. Heaven is unfolded to our view, and we see its freedom from sin, its positive perfection, its white robes, its glorious crowns, and its endless joys. We hear its rapturous harps, celebrating the praises of Jesus, and a voice comes forth to our ears, saying, There is no more death, or

pain, neither sorrow nor crying, and that all tears are forever wiped away. Hell, too, is bared to our trembling gaze, with its endless flames—its never-dying worm—its darkness—its self-contempt—its bereavements, and its hopeless despair. We hear its lamentations and voices of anguish; and as we ask, "Are they forever?" we shudder at the dismal response which is echoed back, "Forever!" Thus in revelation we are not only informed that there is a future state, but *what* it is, and what are its different allotments, that we may know what we have to hope for, or what we have to dread, and that one of these portions must be ours. Before we can enter upon either of these final states, however, it is true,

II. THAT WE MUST ALL BE JUDGED. This, also, we are taught by the word of God. There we are expressly informed that God "hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness"—that "every one of us shall give account of himself to God"—that "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil"—and that "he shall reward every man according to his works." This judgment will be *future*—"we must appear," not *now*, but *hereafter*; *retributive*—"that every one may receive according to that he hath done," *inevitable*—"we must appear;" *universal*—"we must all appear;" and yet *personal*—for "every one shall give account of himself," and shall "receive according to that he hath done." Whether there will be a specific judgment, in the case of each individual, as he leaves this world, is a question not fully settled. But, however that may be, we are plainly pointed to an hour when the whole universe shall be assembled before the throne, at the voice of the archangel, and the summons of the trump of God. Then, shall that which is covered be made manifest, and that which is hid be revealed. The wicked shall be condemned according to their sinfulness, and the righteous be rewarded according to their good deeds—not indeed as the *meritorious* ground of their reward, but as the evidence of that faith by which they are justified, and thus entitled to receive it. Then shall God's justice and his grace shine forth in equal splendor. The impenitent shall go away to everlasting death, while the humble believer is raised to endless life and glory—to joys which eye hath not seen, or ear heard, and the heart of man fails to conceive.

III. THE JUDGE WHO IS TO DECIDE ALL THIS WILL BE THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of *Christ*." By him the world was created, and is now upheld and governed. Through him was redemption provided for its dying millions, and by him will they at last be judged, and their destinies for eternity decided, according to their reception or rejection of his

grace. And in this arrangement there is an evident—a peculiar fitness. Christ, as we have seen, is our immediate moral governor—ever present with us, inspecting all our conduct. And not only does he search our hearts, by virtue of his omniscience, but from his own experience *as a man*, he knows our strength, our temptations, and our infirmities—what allowance is to be made for our weakness, and what severity is deserved by our guilt—where to sympathize, and where to blame—where to pity, and where to forgive. He is abundant, too, in tender mercy—not merely from the infinite compassion of his own nature, but from his relation of brotherhood to us, and therefore we may know that while he is just to punish, he is also disposed to spare—earnest to save. But we are further taught, that in the results of the judgment,

IV. EVERY ONE OF US SHALL BE REWARDED OR PUNISHED ACCORDING TO OUR WORKS. Every one of us shall “receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done.” There shall we stand before an omniscient Judge—his eyes, like a living fiery consciousness, searching our hearts, and bringing to light every evil thought, word and deed. All our neglect of God—of his Son—of his Spirit—of his worship, in the sanctuary, in the family, in the closet; all our transgressions against man—our dishonesty, or overreaching, or oppression, or injustice; all our evil thoughts against the Divine government, or character, or providence—all our unbelief and inward rebellions; every idle, or profane, or false, or slanderous, or unkind word; all broken vows, and violated promises, and equivocating deceits; every unholy practice—every cherished iniquity—every neglected duty—every stifling of conscience—every rejection of the Spirit—every worshipped idol—every wasted Sabbath—every unheeded warning—every perverted truth—every abused mercy; these—all these, like so many angels of darkness, shall appear in judgment against us—each testifying to our guilt—each adding to the weight of endless condemnation, ready to descend upon our unshielded and defenceless heads. And if, in that hour, we have no refuge—no safety in Jesus Christ, that weight *will* descend upon us, and beneath its intolerable burden we must sink forever!

Thus have we seen the reality—the certainty of a future judgment; and that from *reason*, which argues it from God’s justice as a moral governor—from man’s imperfection while here on earth—from his instinctive dread of annihilation, and from his eager longings for immortality; and especially from *revelation*, which asserts the doctrine in the most explicit terms. We have also seen that before entering upon the eternal state we must all be judged—that our

judge will be the Lord Jesus Christ, and, that by him we shall be rewarded or punished, every one of us according to the deeds done on earth.

In view of this subject, we cannot but exclaim,

1. *What a scene will be unfolded at the day of judgment.* Could I take you, my hearer, to some elevated station, and by a word uncover some large city to your view—could I expose to your gaze the naked character, the true condition of every one of its inhabitants—could I show you the covered sins, the secret envies, the bitter hatreds, the stinging slanders, the abused confidence, the false friendships, the loathsome indulgence, the hidden connivings, the corroding selfishness, the cherished villanies, which are living, and rankling, and festering on every side—could I show you the brother hating brother, the guardian defrauding his ward, the friend betraying his friend—in short, could I tear off the masks in which so many of mankind are walking, and show them all to you, just as they *really are*, you can conceive the amazement that would seize your spirit! Extend this thought, this fearful vision, from a city to a county, from a county to a state, from a state to a nation, from a nation to a world, from a world to a universe, and you will have some faint conception of the amazing terrors of the final day. The sounding trump, the dissolving elements, the rending rocks, the flaming earth, the flying heavens, these are but trifles, compared with the sinner's heart, with all its countless sins uncovered and exposed—a fearful spectacle, to the gaze of the universe, to the eye of God! These it is, the sight of which will make the very soul turn pale, which will fill it with guilty tremblings and quaking fears. These are the horrors of the judgment!

In view of our subject, we may again remark,

2. *That the Bible's revelation of a future state is a strong evidence of the Bible's truth.* It is probably true that unaided reason could never have satisfied herself, with *absolute certainty*, of either the reality or the nature of a future state. But when once that reality and nature have been revealed, she sees at a glance that they are reasonable and proper; and in their reasonableness and fitness she perceives a clear proof of the truth of the revelation which makes them known. When, at any time, an enigma has been proposed for your solution, you have often reflected, and thought, and groped in vain for its answer, and finally perhaps have given it up in despair. When, however, the answer is mentioned, you perceive in an instant that it is the *true* answer, because it, and *only* it, completely solves the question before you. And so it is with a future state. Had not revelation aided reason, we might have groped on forever without any absolute assurance respecting it. But when

once its reality and nature are revealed to us, so completely does that revelation chime in with our feelings and our reason, and our sense of moral fitness, *that we know it must be true.*

3. *How great a privilege it is that we enjoy a revelation from God.* Were we obliged to wander in some dark cavern of the earth, where pitfalls were gaping beneath us, and death was yawning on every side, how should we prize the light which should reveal our danger and thus enable us to avoid it! We *are* in such a cavern—it is our state of probation; and the Bible is the light which discloses the future, and shows us how to avoid its evils and secure its blessings, both for this world and that which is to come. Where the heathen were in utter midnight, and the Old Testament saints in comparative darkness, we enjoy the broad light of heaven. If those heathen were guilty for their neglect of God, how deep will be our condemnation if we fail to improve to our repentance and faith, the light with which we are favored; and if the patriarchs could make such progress as many of them did in holiness, how ought we to mount up on wings as eagles—ever to be advancing in the divine life. Again we may learn from this subject

4. *How to estimate happiness.* Its true test is the judgment-seat of Christ. Take all the mere worldly happiness which can be gathered, and if we have no other source of joy, what is it, what can it be to us? It is but a vapor, a flitting dream, a fading leaf, a dissolving cloud, a passing wave, a withering flower! It is but a shadow which is soon gone, a garland that will ere long fade, a light robe, that will be devoured, like chaff, by the last day's flames, leaving our bereaved spirits defenceless, forlorn, friendless, forever! That only is true, substantial happiness, which, like gold from the furnace, will come forth even from *those* flames, purified and of endless brightness! That only is the abode of true happiness, where sin and sorrow can never come, where bliss is endless and without alloy, where is an Eden without a serpent, a crown without a cross, a garden without a sepulchre, a rose without a thorn! Once more, we are taught by this subject,

5. *The importance, the imperious necessity of preparing for the scenes to which it points us as so very near.* If about to journey to a distant place, you would all admit, and *feel* too, the necessity of preparing for it. How much more should you feel this necessity when the journey is to terminate, and that too very soon, in mansions of endless joy or wo! Especially let me urge this consideration upon the children and youth of this congregation, and let it be impressed upon you by the providence, which is the voice of God. Within a few days, my dear friends, one of your number has commenced, or rather

has ended this journey. Marked by peculiar loveliness, often had she mingled in your enjoyments, and joined you in your studies in yonder hall, and been beside you in the Sabbath school and the Bible class. And I have met her in the room of solemn inquiry, asking, with tearful earnestness, "What shall I do to be saved?" And often have I urged her to accept the offers of the gospel, and yield her heart to the Redeemer, that her soul might be saved. But a few days since, and her health still continued, and her prospects of life were as fair as those of any of you. And then, as in a moment, she was thrown upon the bed of wasting sickness; and when I was called to her bed-side, her reason was stupified, and death was purpling her lips and blanching her cheek; her eyes were closed from weakness, and her breath was gasping to its final flight; and soon the shroud was her garment, and the coffin her bed, and she was senseless to the flowing tears, and the sobbing grief, and the breaking hearts of parents, and kindred, and friends. But a few days since, she was with you, and to-day the sun is shining upon her grave, and her deathless soul is in the world of spirits!

And now I ask you, my dear friends, are you prepared for that dying chamber, and that winding sheet, and that final hour? Ye who were companions of the departed, are you prepared to be seized as in a moment, and borne away to the sepulchre?—to follow her as suddenly as she was called, to the judgment, to the unseen world? I come to you with a message from God, entreating you, by this affecting call of his providence, that you prepare to meet him. "*To the judgment!—to the judgment!*" is echoed to you from the grave of your companion, by the voice of conscience, by the strivings of the Spirit, by the word of God. To the judgment—to the judgment, you are passing as on the wings of the wind, as the arrow through the air, as the lightning through the clouds! Be wise and prepare for it, lest you be miserable forever. *Prepare for it*, and thus be fitted for a happy life, a blissful death, and a glorious immortality. Prepare for it *now*, while health continues; *for a dying hour is the most wretched of all moments in which to prepare for heaven!* I repeat it, and I bring the warning from yonder chamber of the dying—would that I could impress it forever upon every heart—**A DYING HOUR IS THE MOST WRETCHED OF ALL MOMENTS IN WHICH TO PREPARE FOR HEAVEN!**

SERMON CCLIV.

BY REV. TRYON EDWARDS.

THE SINNER'S CHARACTER, COURSE, AND END.

PHIL., iii. 18, 19.—*Of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ;—whose end is destruction—whose God is their belly—and whose glory is in their shame—who mind earthly things.*

THERE is no inconsistency between high attainments, or strength of mind, and deep emotion of heart—between the most exalted greatness, and the truest tenderness of feeling. Xerxes could shed tears to think, that of all the millions whom he commanded, in a few short years not one would remain. Cicero and Demosthenes, in their respective banishments, often wept at the thought of their ungrateful but beloved countries. Cæsar did the same when he beheld the fate of his dreaded but respected rival. And even the stern Napoleon shed tears when thinking of the thousands whom he had led on to be frozen, and starved, and slaughtered, and burned, amid the frosts, and famine, and conflicts, and flames of the memorable Russian campaign. Now in all these cases, there was nothing of weakness—nothing unmanly in tears. On the contrary, they sprang from principles, or feelings, or sentiments, which, if not perverted, are some of the noblest of our nature—from the same magnanimity and greatness of soul which is capable of projecting the loftiest plans, and of securing the noblest and best results. It is no mark of weakness to weep—no mark of manliness to be unmoved when every thing appeals to our hearts—when the occasion might almost melt tears from the solid rock.

These remarks are true of all, but peculiarly of the characters of sacred history. When Joseph wept at the sight of his long lost brother, and at the story of his aged father's sufferings—when the noble-hearted but impetuous Peter wept in bitterness at the remembrance of his denial of his Lord—when Jesus, in his character of a man and a prophet, shed tears at Lazarus' grave, or poured forth floods of grief over the devoted city of Jerusalem—their tears not only excite our

sympathy, but they demand, and they receive too, our unqualified respect.

And so in reference to our text. When Paul weeps, it is not from weakness—it is not without the most abundant reason. Though by nature a man of mighty mind, and arduous enterprise, and tireless energy of purpose, still, when the immortal soul was full in his view—when he thought of the sinfulness of its course, and the fearfulness of its prospect if unconverted—when he saw the unspeakable glory to which it might rise, or the endless woe to which it might sink—when he remembered, too, that all was to be won or lost in the fleeting moment of life, then indeed he could feel, and feeling he could weep, and act, and preach, and pray, with the utmost tenderness and faithfulness, for the salvation of men.

It seems to have been with such feelings that he uttered the words of our text. He had just been urging the Phillipian Christians to walk worthy of their vocation. And then, as if his soul were burdened with the condition of the impenitent, he adds that *some* walk, not as he would have them walk—"of whom," says he, "I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ;—whose end is destruction—whose God is their belly—whose glory is in their shame—who mind earthly things."

These words were originally spoken of those of an ancient city—of those who have long since gone to the bar of God, and some of them doubtless to the woes of despair. But are they not also full of instruction to us? If the apostle were to-day to stand before us, might he not point to some in this congregation, in these seats, I almost tremble to add, might he not point to some of us who this morning came around the table of Christ, whom he might class with those spoken of in the text? Yes, my hearers, there are undoubtedly some of us to whom his language might refer.

LET US INQUIRE WHO ARE THEY TO WHOM THE APOSTLE REFERS, THAT THUS WE MAY BE PREPARED TO APPRECIATE AND ENTER INTO HIS FEELINGS RESPECTING THEM.

Who then are they to whom the apostle refers? They may be known,

I. *By the disposition which they cherish towards God.* "They are the enemies of the cross of Christ." Some of you, my impenitent hearers, may perhaps deem this a severe charge,—to say that you are the enemies of God, enemies of your Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor—of the Redeemer who died that you might live. But remember that it is Jehovah's assertion, and that I am placed here by him, not to lull you to the sleep of death by prophesying smooth things, but

to tell you, in all fidelity and kindness, the plain, and simple, and pointed truth, if perhaps it may be the means of saving your souls. And now for the question,—of whom does the apostle speak? He that is not for God is against him, and of course is his enemy. If, then, my hearer, you are not *with* God's friends, if with them you do not believe in him, and love and serve him, if you are not disposed to profess his name before men, if you are not living for the advancement of his cause, then you may know that you are his enemy! This enmity will appear in your judgment, in your will, in your affections, in your practice. It will appear *in your judgment*. You will have comparatively little esteem for God. Men are ever ready to think highly of their friends, to praise their good qualities, to regard their wishes, and to conceal their defects; of their enemies, on the contrary, they will entertain a low opinion, attributing even their good traits to wrong motives, disregarding their wishes, and searching out and exposing their defects. And so with the impenitent towards God. Comparatively, they entertain low and unworthy thoughts both of his character and government. They may perhaps at times be elevated by sublime conceptions of the Godhead, and their soul may swell with the emotion, as it might at the view of the thundering cataract, or the cloud-capt mountain. But they never heartily adore him, or reverence his institutions, or obey his laws, or cherish or exhibit a tender regard to his wishes. And if they do not in the spirit of enmity search out defects in his character, that they may expose them, it is only because they know that character to be perfect: and what they cannot do in this way, they sometimes do in another, by disregarding and perhaps even sneering at religion, by making sport of serious things, and by watching for the defects and errors of God's friends, that they may hold them up to the ridicule and scorn of others. Is such an estimate of God, of his religion, and of his friends, the estimate of friendship? Do you so treat any earthly friend? Is it not rather the estimate of an opposing spirit—of enmity? Again,

This enmity appears also *in the will* of the impenitent. Their wills are directly opposed to God's will. They will those things which he hates, and he those which they hate; so long as they are unconverted, they ever oppose the will of God; chastisement fails to subdue them, mercy to win, threatenings to alarm, invitations to allure, love to melt; so obstinate and persevering is their opposition that it is never overcome but by the Holy Spirit; such is their carnal mind that they are not subject to the law of God; that they are enemies to his authority, to his actual rule, to all his wishes, so far as they clash with their own.

This enmity is further manifest *in their affections*. The unrenewed heart is not only deceitful above all things, but it is desperately wicked. As we have already said, it may have some vague respect and admiration for the exalted nature and sublimity of God's character. But it is perfectly obvious that it has no love for his moral attributes, for his holiness, no love for himself as a holy God, or for the spiritual duties of religion. Its affections fasten on forbidden objects—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. It finds no delight in communion with God, and in cherishing a devout and humble spirit. It loves the world supremely, though Christ hath said, that “if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” And even if it do not, at times, like the Scribes and Pharisees, break out into open, and bitter, and malicious opposition, still its general condition, the uniform tenor of its course, is that of utter worldliness and forgetfulness of God. But the enmity of men to God is especially and constantly manifest *in their practice*. In the graphic language of the apostle, they are “enemies by wicked works.” As Enoch walked with God, so they walk contrary to him—that is the *habit* of their lives. They do all things for self; and even they themselves will probably admit that there is not a solitary action of their lives which they are led to perform solely because God requires it, and because they think it will honor him. If they do not openly and bitterly oppose his will and all his commands, still they are *ever* doing that which they know he dislikes and forbids. By a single act of profaneness, or drunkenness, or Sabbath breaking, if unrepented of, we know that a man plainly shows himself God's enemy—a violator of his law. And does he not habitually evince that enmity by neglecting to forsake his sins, by disregarding the calls of mercy, and wasting probation, and trifling with conscience, and grieving the Holy Spirit—by *living, deliberately* living in impenitence, and thus practically despising the blood of atonement! Yes, my hearers, if there be any truth in the maxim that actions speak louder than words—that conduct is the true index of feeling, then is every one of you who is impenitent *an enemy of God!* Again, and again, and again, in the Bible, you are in so many words called his enemy, and your conscience fully sanctions the charge, for it tells you that you are not his devoted and faithful friends, and *neutral* you cannot be. You may be moral men, good members of society, respected and beloved, and deservedly so, in all the relations of life. In short, you may be of that number who may well be called *God's most respectable enemies*. But still you are enemies, enemies of the cross of Christ, of its self-denial, of its submission, of its holiness, of all its requirements; *enemies* of all these

until you are reconciled to God by faith in Christ. Those of whom our text speaks, may also be known,

II. *By their habitual devotedness to the world.* They "mind earthly things." They are *engrossed* with the world, with its cares, its follies, or its business; ever *bent* upon the attainment of all that the earth deems of value. The Christian's conversation is in heaven, but not so with them; *their* conversation is of the earth, earthy. The one uses, the other abuses the world. The one makes every thing subservient to growth in grace, the other, by every thing, only aggravates his own guilt. For the one, to live is Christ, for the other, to live is the world. He is called to aspire to the *honors of heaven*, honors pure and unfading; and yet he prefers the honors of the world, whose garlands, if they fade not in his grasp, will ever bring a thorn to his brow. He is urged to strive for the *riches of heaven*, riches which endure forever, and yet he is ever grasping after the riches of earth, which he may not be able to attain, and which he must soon leave by the side of his grave. He is entreated to seek the *pleasures of heaven*, satisfying and eternal as they are; and yet, with feverish thirst, he is ever eager for the pleasures of time and sense, which can never fill the soul, and which leave behind them the sting of eternal death. He is invited to the favor of the ever-living God, the greatest and the best of all beings; and yet he prefers the fleeting favor of man, whose smiles of to-day are the frowns of to-morrow; whose "hosannas" of the passing hour may be the "crucify him" of the next. In all these respects, the world is his idol. Its honors he prefers to those which come from God, its ways to the ways of holiness, its joys to those which are eternal, its applause to the favor of Christ, its riches to those of heaven, its crowns to a crown of glory. He lives here, as if the earth were his endless abode; and the language of his heart, of his life, is, that if he could have his fill of this world, and that forever, he would not wish a better heaven. He would indeed like very well to have the world here, and the *bliss* of heaven (though he cares not for its holiness) hereafter. But if he cannot have both, like the young man in the gospel, he is willing to

"Let Christ, and heaven, and glory go,
To make his wealth and pleasures sure."

Is this, my hearer, in any respect, the way in which you are living? If so, you are the enemy of the cross of Christ. Those of whom the apostle speaks may also be known,

III. *By the importance which they attach to the pleasures of appetite and sense.* Their "God is their belly." By this I suppose the apostle intended to assert that they deliberately and habitually

make self-indulgence, in some form, the object of their supreme attachment, of their constant pursuit. And this is the very worst form of idolatry; for the lower the objects of our practical worship, the lower are we ourselves degraded. The man who worships an idol of wood or stone is gradually sinking himself only to the stupidity of the block or the marble. But he who makes a God of his own appetites, is rapidly degrading himself to the level of the brute here, and of the fiend hereafter. And yet this is the tendency of every one who is so far forgetful of God, and of his own nobler nature, as to make self-gratification in any form the chief object of pursuit; and this not merely at the dictate of *impulse*, but on *principle*, the fixed principles of sin and death. Those of whom we speak are further designated,

IV. *By the false and flattering estimate which they form of their own course.* "Whose glory is in their shame." Not only are they opposed to that which should be their highest glory, but not unfrequently they glory even in their neglect of religion, in their sinfulness, in their very enmity to God and holy things. This glorying, in different individuals, appears under various aspects. Now it leads the sinner to regard his own course with complacency or self-gratulation. Now it searches out and proclaims the defects of professing Christians, contrasting their inconsistencies with its own fancied correctness. Now it plumes itself on its own external morality—saying with the Pharisee, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men." And now it appears in its highest, its most glaring form, exulting in its own opposition to truth and piety, shamelessly boasting of its own sinfulness, or even glorying in deeds which are enough to make angels weep and devils blush! Either in these, or in other and kindred forms, it is usually found in those of whom we speak.

Once more, those alluded to by the apostle may also be known,

V. *By the end to which they are rapidly tending.* Their "end is destruction." The career of man is ever either upward to heaven or downward to hell. There is no middle ground which he can occupy. He cannot stop at the *brute*, for he has intellect and conscience. If, therefore, he is not rising to become an angel, he is sinking to become a devil. And his end will be everlasting destruction from the presence of God, and the glory of his power—destruction by the just wrath of Jehovah—destruction which is hopeless and endless, "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched."

Such are those spoken of in our text. They are the enemies of the cross of Christ—they mind earthly things—their God is their belly—they glory in their shame—and their end is destruction. Well might the apostle *weep* over such, tears of mingled compassion, and sorrow,

and grief. Well might he weep at the ingratitude of their lives, the degradation of their aims, the folly of their course, the guilt of their conduct, the mournfulness of their condition, the fearfulness of their end! He wept, and well he might; for it is a melancholy spectacle to behold a being who is the offspring of Jehovah's power, the object of his constant care, the recipient of his ceaseless mercy; to contemplate such a being, reckless of his obligations and forgetful of infinite kindness, rising up in rebellion and raising his hand against his Father in heaven; striving to dethrone God, that he may exalt self; seeking unworthy objects; glorying in his shame; and finally ending his course in remediless ruin! Yes, there is reason for tears when we ponder the sinner's course, the sinner's prospects, and the sinner's end. The maniac with a *mind* in ruins is a mournful sight; but far more so is a *heart* in ruins, with the prospect of remaining so forever! The wreck of earthly hopes is often enough to wring the heart with sorrow; but what is this to the wreck of all that is bright and glorious in the destiny of an immortal soul! Misapplied talent and disappointed affection often excite melancholy emotions; and yet what are all the wasted talents or affections of this world, to those of the world of despair! O! it is enough to make angels weep to think of all the disappointed hopes, and the blighted feelings, and the ruined prospects, and the perverted intellect, and the broken hearts of hell! To see the eye that might have sparkled with celestial brightness, gleaming forever with hopeless desperation; to hear the tongue that might have hymned the sweet anthems of the redeemed, breaking the silence of perdition only with weeping and wailing; to behold the intellect, the heart, the soul, the entire being that might have adorned the heaven of heavens, cast down to the blackness of darkness, the companion of devils and lost spirits—yes, it is enough to make angels weep—enough, I had almost said, to wake compassion in the heart of the vilest outcast in perdition. And yet, fellow-sinners, such is the end to which you are rapidly tending—the end which may soon be yours! A little while, and you will part with your present means of grace, and your probation and your hopes will end together. And can you bear to go up to the judgment with your present character, there to stand before that God who is your enemy? Can you bear to meet the Judge's brow of burning indignation, or to hear your sentence of endless anguish?—to part forever from Christian friends—the loved ones of earth—you to go downward to perdition, while they go upward to heaven, and then to see the impassable gulf spreading forever between you and them, while no voice of mercy, or ray of hope, or gleam of consolation shall ever dawn upon your prison-house of woe? Tell me, dear hearer,

can you endure all this? And yet all this, and more—more than this is yours, unless you turn from your evil ways, and make God your friend. Well might the apostle weep over you, at what you are, and at what is before you. Had his head been waters, and his eyes a fountain of tears, there is no object in the universe that might with more reason exhaust that fountain, than the sight of the thoughtless, impenitent sinner, rushing on, amid all the hazards of time, to all the ruin of a lost eternity!

REFLECTIONS.

1. *This subject affords one of many answers to the complaint, sometimes made by the impenitent, of what they call the gloom of Christians.* When Humé once complained of the gloominess of many Christians whom he had known, he was told in reply by an eminent divine, that the sight of *himself* was at any time enough to make a Christian sad, and that his own infidelity was abundant cause for the sadness of those who knew him. And so, my impenitent friends, the thought of your present course of sin, and of your future prospects of woe, is enough to wake the most mournful reflections in the heart of every thinking and devoted Christian. And if you ever observe such an one sad in your presence, you may perhaps find in *yourself* the explanation of his sadness!

2. *This subject suggests a sure and searching test of Christian character.* To feel, as the apostle felt for the honor of God, and for the souls of others, is an essential trait of every real Christian. The feeling will indeed be modified in each according to the temperament of the individual; but in each it will exist, as a deep-rooted and ever active principle—flowing forth in desire, and prayer, and effort for the conversion of others. To suppose a real Christian a stranger to these feelings is a contradiction in terms. It is like supposing an affectionate child who has no regard for his father, a loyal subject who hates his sovereign. And though the professed child of God may at times feel less and do less for the salvation of others than he ought, yet just so far as he continues in this state, especially if warned of his sin and danger, just so far does he give evidence to all, that his name to live, like the epitaph on the tombstone, is but a remembrancer to all that he is dead. Christian hearers, will you apply this test in all fidelity to your present condition, and feelings, and hopes? What are you doing for the conversion of the impenitent?—for the salvation of all who are ready to perish? Nothing? Then a sigh for your hopes, and a tear for your inconsistency, and a prayer for your repentance, and a warning to your souls, is all that I have from God for you!

3. *Our subject appeals to those who are Christians, to emulate the example of the apostle.* Not only must we feel as he felt for the impenitent, but we must pray and act for their conversion, as he did, and that without ceasing. We have no time to waste in melancholy musings, or sentimental sadness, or useless, idle tears. There is misery—there is sin—there is danger enough demanding our instant, and ceaseless, and prayerful effort. With heaven open before us, and our neighbors and friends falling from its blissful glories—with hell yawning beneath us, and those around us plunging to its darkness and anguish, let us wake to our duty, and in the strength of God rush to their rescue, if perhaps we may snatch them as brands from the burning. Say not, with Cain, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” In an important sense you *are* your brother’s keeper, and if unfaithful to his soul, his blood may be required at your hands. To-day, at the table of Christ, you have renewedly consecrated yourself to the service of God, and the salvation of your fellow-men. Beware of unfaithfulness, lest “Judas,” “Traitor,” be written on your brow, and the curse of God rest upon your soul!

Once more, finally,

4. *The sinner may see in this subject, as in a glass, the picture of himself.* Before you is the plain of probation. It is filled with pitfalls, and snares, and death; and over it I see an individual thoughtlessly rushing. He is offered guidance and safety, but he refuses both. Mercy invites and wrath urges his return, but he disregards alike the melting accents of the one, and the indignant frown of the other. Before him the storm of vengeance is darkly gathering, and no rainbow of mercy sits upon its clouds; its thunders peal, and its lightnings blaze upon his path, and the smoke that rises from the blackness of darkness is full in his view, and still he presses onward. And now the wailings of despair ring upon his ear, and its lurid flames glare upon his vision, and still he presses onward—with the reckless delusion of sin, with desperate decision, with the madness of despair—as true to sin, and death, and hell, as the needle to the pole! And now the burning lake is just before him, but he stays not in his course. And now he stumbles on its very verge, and plunges to its fiery bosom, and with a single stifled groan, is lost forever! And who is that reckless, heedless, ruined mortal? Fellow-sinner, it is you! Such is *your* course—*your* folly—*your* madness—*such, I fear, will be your end!*